

Accessibility

The Maryland Judiciary is committed to making jury service accessible to everyone. If you have any concerns about accessibility issues (for example, for disabled citizens), please contact your Jury Commissioner in advance.

More Questions?

Contact the Jury Commissioner's Office in your county, or visit the Jury Service web site at <http://www.courts.state.md.us/juryservice/index.html>.

During Deliberations, Jurors Should:

- Work out differences among themselves and other jurors through complete and fair discussion of the evidence and the judge's instruction. Jurors should listen to the opinion of other jurors.
- Refrain from marking, writing, injuring, or changing the trial exhibits.
- Not try to guess what might happen if the case is appealed. Appellate courts deal only with legal questions; they will not change a verdict if the jury decided the facts based on proper evidence and instructions.
- Make sure they do not talk to anyone about deliberations or about the verdict until the judge discharges the jury. After discharge, jurors may discuss the verdict and the deliberations with anyone they choose, but are not obligated to do so.

"Your service as a juror is what makes our justice system the finest in the world. On behalf of the Maryland Judiciary, I offer our thanks to those of you who have served, and will serve, as jurors."



Robert M. Bell
Chief Judge
Court of Appeals

An informative guide to

Jury Service



Sponsored by the Maryland Judiciary Public Awareness Committee

Please visit the Jury Service web site:
www.courts.state.md.us/juryservice/index.html

Some Do's and Don'ts during Trial

Do take notes during the trial if necessary to help you remember critical information, unless the judge instructs you otherwise.

Don't let yourself get information about the case from news media or any other outside source. If you accidentally hear outside information about the case during the trial, tell a member of the court staff in private.

Don't try to guess what the judge thinks about the case. Remember the rulings from the bench do not reflect the judge's personal views.

Don't talk about the case, or issues raised by the case, with anyone, including other jurors, while the trial is going on—except if instructed otherwise by the judge.

Don't let others talk about the case in your presence, even family members. If someone insists on talking to you or another juror about the case, please report the matter to a court employee. These rules are designed to help you keep an open mind during the trial.

Don't talk to the lawyers, parties, or witnesses about anything. This will avoid the impression that something unfair is going on.

Don't try to uncover evidence on your own. Decide the case only on the basis of evidence admitted in court.

Frequently Asked Questions

How Was I Chosen?

A jury is selected at random from a cross section of Maryland citizens. This cross section is drawn from motor vehicle and voter registration pools.

To be eligible for jury service, you must be at least 18 years old, a United States citizen, a Maryland resident, and able to read, write, and understand the English language. You can be exempt from jury service if you: have served as a juror in the preceding three years; are a certified member of an organized militia; or are at least 70 years of age and request exemption in writing. If you meet any of these criteria, please call the Jury Commissioner in your court before your first day of jury service.

Where Do I Report?

You must report at the time and place indicated on your summons. The night before you are scheduled to report, call the number on your summons to verify that you still must appear. If the message is not clear or silent, report as scheduled.

Once in the Jury Lounge, you sign in, await the call of your name, and eventually you will be directed to a courtroom or given other instructions by the Jury Coordinator.

What Happens Next?

In the courtroom, the judge will tell you about the case, and introduce you to the

lawyers and others who are involved in the case. You will also take an oath, in which you will promise to answer all questions truthfully.

After you are sworn in, you and the other potential members of the jury will go through a process known as *voir dire*, or jury selection.

During jury selection, the judge and the lawyers question you and other members of the panel to find out if any of you have any knowledge of the case, a personal interest in the outcome, or any interest in the case that might make it hard for you to be impartial.

How Long Will I Serve?

How many days and hours you work will depend on the case you are assigned. In a few jurisdictions, jury service is limited to one day/one trial. Other jurisdictions have varying lengths of service, ranging from seven days to seven months. The nature of the issues and evidence in a particular case may require a longer trial. The judge will inform you at the beginning of the trial as to how long it is anticipated the trial will last.

You may be surprised by how much waiting you have to do. Judges and other courtroom personnel will do everything they can to minimize the waiting. You may wish to bring something to read.

Parties often settle their differences only moments before the trial is scheduled to begin. In such instances, you will be excused with the thanks of the court.

What about My Job?

Your employer cannot deprive you of your job solely because of job time you lose as a result of service as a juror.

What Type of Case May I Hear?

Jury cases are either civil or criminal. Civil cases are disputes between private citizens, corporations, governments, or other organizations. Usually, the party that brings the suit (the plaintiff) asks for money damages for some wrong alleged to have been done.

The State brings a criminal case against one or more persons accused of committing a crime. The person accused of the crime is the defendant. The State must prove “beyond a reasonable doubt” that the defendant committed the alleged crime.

What if I Have an Emergency?

Because your absence can delay a trial, it is important that you report each day you are required. If an emergency occurs, such as a sudden illness, accident, or death in the family, tell the court staff immediately so the court can take your circumstances into account.

What Happens During a Trial?

Events in a trial usually happen in a particular order, though the order may be changed by the judge. Here is the usual order of events: selection of the jury; opening statements; presentation of the evidence; jury instructions; closing arguments; jury deliberations; announcement of the verdict.

What Can Be Brought In?

We are often asked whether pagers, cellular telephones, cameras, or other electronic equipment can be brought into the courtroom. If you wish to bring any of these items with you, please check with the Jury Commissioner in advance. Rules vary by jurisdiction. Some courthouses will not allow access to anyone carrying these items.

What Should I Wear?

We ask that all jurors observe courtroom decorum. Consider how you would dress for an office job, or for a job interview. Generally, no shorts, T-shirts with logos, or halter tops are permitted.

